

Introduction to Reference Work Volume I

Basic
Information
Sources

William A. Katz

Sixth
Edition



INTRODUCTION TO REFERENCE WORK

Volume I **Basic Information Sources**

Sixth Edition

William A. Katz

State University of New York at Albany

McGraw-Hill, Inc.

New York St. Louis San Francisco Auckland Bogotá
Caracas Lisbon London Madrid Mexico City Milan
Montreal New Delhi San Juan Singapore
Sydney Tokyo Toronto

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

INTRODUCTION TO REFERENCE WORK, Volume I
Basic Information Sources

Copyright © 1992, 1987, 1982, 1978, 1974, 1969 by McGraw-Hill, Inc. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America. Except as permitted under the United States Copyright Act of 1976, no part of this publication may be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means, or stored in a data base or retrieval system, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

6 7 8 9 0 DOC DOC 9 0 9 8 7 6 5

ISBN 0-07-033638-5

This book was set in Baskerville by Waldman Graphics, Inc.
The editors were Judith R. Cornwell and Jean Akers;
the production supervisor was Louise Karam.
The cover was designed by Carla Bauer.
R. R. Donnelley & Sons Company was printer and binder.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Katz, William A., (date).

Introduction to reference work / William A. Katz.—6th ed.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and indexes.

Contents: v. 1. Basic information sources—v. 2. Reference services and reference processes.

ISBN 0-07-033638-5 (v. 1).—ISBN 0-07-033639-3 (v. 2)

1. Reference services (Libraries) 2. Reference books—

Bibliography. I. Title.

Z711.K32 1992

025.5'2—dc20

91-9714

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

WILLIAM A. KATZ is a professor at the School of Information Science and Policy, State University of New York at Albany. He was a librarian at the King County (Washington) Library for four years and worked in the editorial department of the American Library Association. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago and has been the editor of *RQ*, the journal of the Reference and Adult Services Division of the American Library Association, and the *Journal of Education for Librarianship*. Professor Katz is now editor of *The Reference Librarian*, a quarterly devoted to issues in modern reference and information services, and *The Acquisitions Librarian*, concerned with collection development. He is the editor of *Magazines for Libraries* and edits a magazine column in *Library Journal*. In addition, he edits a collection, *Reference and Information Services: A Reader*, as well as *The Columbia Granger's Guide to Poetry Anthologies*.

PREFACE

The purpose of *Basic Information Sources*, Volume I of this sixth edition two-volume *Introduction to Reference Work*, remains the same as for the previous five editions: to acquaint students, librarians, and library users with various information sources. While written primarily for students of reference service and practicing reference librarians, the book is an introduction to basic sources that can also help laypeople use the library effectively.

NEW TO THIS EDITION

In this sixth edition, virtually only the organizational pattern remains the same; the revision is extensive, with fifth edition material reorganized and updated. Chapter 2, "Computers and Reference Service," is a new chapter added to reflect changes that have taken place in the curriculum. Since the fifth edition was published in 1987, new methods of data storage and retrieval have changed the ways reference librarians assist library users. It is no longer possible to isolate computer reference services in separate chapters, as was done in the fifth edition's Volume II when these systems were new. What was then a limited approach to reference questions has now become an accepted, if not always easy-to-use, method of finding answers. Therefore, in addition to the new Chapter 2, discussions of electronic reference systems, such as online and CD-ROM, are integrated into the analyses of all reference forms. Volume II, *Reference Services and Reference Processes*, expands on computer-assisted reference services, with coverage of searching patterns and addi-

tional information on where and how to locate software and hardware.

PLAN OF THE BOOK

Volume I is divided into three parts. Part One (Chapters 1 and 2) constitutes an introduction to the reference process and automated reference services.

Part Two, "Information: Control and Access," consists of Chapters 3 through 6 and covers an introduction to bibliographies, indexing, and abstracting services. Chapters 7 through 12 are in Part Three, "Sources of Information," which include encyclopedias, various ready reference sources, biographical sources, dictionaries, geographical sources, and government documents.

It is as pointless for students to memorize details about specific reference sources, as it is necessary for them to grasp the essential areas of agreement and difference among the various forms. To this end, every effort is made to compare rather than to detail. Only basic or foundation reference works are discussed in this volume. But readers may not find *all* basic titles included or annotated because: (1) There is no consensus on what constitutes "basic". (2) The objective of this text is to discuss various forms, and the titles used for that purpose are those that best illustrate those forms. (3) The annotations for a specific title are duplicated over and over again in *Guide to Reference Books* and *Guide to Reference Materials*, which list the numerous subject bibliographies.

In both volumes, suggested readings are found in the footnotes and at the end of each chapter. When a publication is cited in a footnote, the reference is rarely duplicated in the "Suggested Reading." For the most part, these readings are limited to publications issued since 1987. In addition to providing readers with current thinking, these more recent citations have the added bonus of making it easier for the student to locate the readings. A number of the suggested reading items will be found in *Reference and Information Sources, A Reader, 4th ed.*, published by Scarecrow Press, in 1991. It is beyond argument, of course, that *all* readings need not necessarily be current and that many older articles and books are as valuable today as they were when first published. Thanks to many teachers' having retained earlier editions of this text and the aforementioned Scarecrow title, it is possible to have a bibliography of previous readings.

As has been done in all previous editions, the sixth edition

notes prices for most of the major basic titles. This practice seems particularly useful today, since librarians must more and more be aware of budgetary constraints when selecting reference titles. CD-ROMS are listed where available. Prices are based on information either from the publisher of the original reference source or from the publisher of the CD-ROM disc. If a particular work is available online, the gross hourly rate as charged by DIALOG is given for its use. Both this rate and the book prices are current as of late 1990 and are useful in determining relative costs.

Bibliographic data are based on publisher's catalogs, *Books in Print*, and examination of the titles. The information is applicable as of late 1990 and, like prices, is subject to change.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to the many teachers of reference and bibliography who through the years have given their advice and help. Thanks are due, too, to reviewers who critiqued manuscript for this and previous editions; most recently they include David Carr, Rutgers University, and Bonnie Baker Thorne, Sam Houston State University. My thanks also go to my students and those in other classes across the country who have given me valuable suggestions.

My particular thanks to Judith R. Cornwell, the patient, imaginative McGraw-Hill editor who did so much to improve the organization and the clarity of both Volumes I and II. I must also thank my meticulous editing supervisor, Jean Akers, for her patience and hard work. It is as pleasant as it is rewarding to work with such professionals.

William A. Katz

CONTENTS

Preface	xv
----------------	-----------

PART I INTRODUCTION

1	<i>The Reference Process</i>	3
	Reference Librarians	5
	Reference Service Guidelines	7
	Reference Service and the Library	9
	Reference Questions	11
	Information Sources	18
	Evaluating Reference Sources	23
	Conclusion: What's Important to Learn	30
	<i>Suggested Reading</i>	31
2	<i>Computers and Reference Service</i>	33
	The Computer Database	36
	Searching with the Computer	43
	Computer-Searching Problems	44

Database Vendors	48
CD-ROM	50
The Future of Automation and Reference Service	51
<i>Suggested Reading</i>	54

PART II INFORMATION: CONTROL AND ACCESS

3	<i>Introduction to Bibliography</i>	59
	Systematic Enumerative Bibliography	60
	Evaluation of a Bibliography	66
	Guides to Reference Books	67
	Current Selection Aids	72
	Indexes to Review	76
	Bibliography of Bibliographies	78
	Bibliographies: Nonprint Materials	79
	<i>Suggested Reading</i>	86
4	<i>Bibliographies: National Library Catalogs and Trade Bibliographies</i>	89
	Union Catalogs	91
	NUC Online and CD-ROM	96
	National Bibliographies outside the United States	99
	Trade Bibliography	101
	Weekly and Monthly Bibliographies	108
	Information about Publishers	111
	Reader's Advisory Services	115
	Bibliographies: Periodicals and Newspapers	119
	<i>Suggested Reading</i>	128
5	<i>Indexing and Abstracting Services:</i>	
	<i>General and Collections</i>	131
	CD-ROM versus the Printed Index	132

Traditional Indexes	133
Subject Headings and the Search	135
Full-Text Availability	140
Evaluation	142
General Periodical Indexes	149
Indexes to Material in Collections	163
<i>Suggested Reading</i>	166
6 <i>Indexing and Abstracting Services:</i>	
<i>Subject and Newspaper</i>	169
Subject Indexes	169
ABI/INFORM	177
Citation Indexing	196
Indexes to Current Events	200
<i>Suggested Reading</i>	210

PART III SOURCES OF INFORMATION

7 <i>Encyclopedias: General and Subject</i>	215
Evaluating Encyclopedias	221
Electronic Encyclopedias	236
CD-ROM	237
Adult Encyclopedias	238
Popular Adult and High School Sets	242
Children's and Young Adults' Encyclopedias	248
Encyclopedia Supplements: Yearbooks	256
One-Volume Encyclopedias	258
Foreign-Published Multivolume Encyclopedias	260
Subject Encyclopedias	265
<i>Suggested Reading</i>	275

8	<i>Ready-Reference Sources: Almanacs, Yearbooks, Handbooks, Directories</i>	277
	Evaluation	279
	General Fact Books	284
	Almanacs and Yearbooks	286
	General Almanacs and Yearbooks	288
	Representative Yearbooks	291
	Handbooks and Manuals	294
	Advice and Information	305
	Directories	315
	<i>Suggested Reading</i>	327
9	<i>Biographical Sources</i>	329
	Searching Biographical Sources	330
	Evaluation	332
	Indexes to Biography	338
	Universal and Current Biographical Sources	342
	Essay Form of Biographical Sources	347
	Professional and Subject Biographies	352
	<i>Suggested Readings</i>	359
10	<i>Dictionaries</i>	361
	Evaluation	364
	Unabridged Dictionaries	373
	Desk (College) Dictionaries	375
	Children's Dictionaries	380
	Historical Dictionary	382
	Machine-Readable Dictionaries	384
	Specialized Dictionaries	385
	CD-ROM	397
	<i>Suggested Readings</i>	397
11	<i>Geographical Sources</i>	399
	Definitions and Scope	400

	Evaluation	404
	Major-Size World Atlases	410
	Government Maps	414
	Thematic Maps and Atlases	416
	Gazetteers	420
	Travel Guides	422
	<i>Suggested Reading</i>	423
12	<i>Government Documents</i>	425
	Organization and Selection	426
	Government Information Policy	428
	Acquisition	430
	Guides	432
	Government Organization	433
	Catalogs	436
	Government in Action	440
	Statistics	446
	State and Local Documents	451
	<i>Suggested Reading</i>	453
	Index	455

PART I

INTRODUCTION



CHAPTER ONE

THE REFERENCE PROCESS



What is the reference process? It is the process of answering questions.¹ This simple equation may be quickly analyzed, and the basic factors are listed here:

1. *Information.* This comes in many formats. It may come from a traditional book or magazine or from a book or magazine in machine-readable form, accessible by a computer. There is often too much of it, or not enough. It can be difficult to locate and even more challenging to interpret.
2. *The user.* This is the person who puts the question to the librarian, and often he or she is not quite sure how to frame the query. A basic problem in reference work is trying to determine precisely what type of answer is required.
3. *The reference librarian.* The key individual in the equation, the librarian, is the person who interprets the question, identifies the precise source for an answer, and, with the user, decides whether or not the response is adequate.

Although a simple description of the reference process has

¹No one would dismiss reference service as simply answering questions. It is much, much more. At the same time the definition offers a good, pragmatic start. As the reader progresses through these volumes, and particularly the second volume, it will become apparent just how complex reference service is and how and why it has been the study of countless researchers in almost as many fields from psychology and medicine to law and history.

been given here, this can never be definitive. Because of the rapid changes occurring in information technology, the reference process will continue to change too. But its goal remains the same: to answer questions.

There are numerous approaches to tackling this information and answer equation, and students know many of them.

Consider cramming, for instance, which requires skills of evaluation, focus, and retention. Learning what information is important, marginal, or useless is an essential part of what colleges teach. Cramming

is properly criticized as a way of trying to look good academically without long term retention . . . but it also teaches valuable job skills. It teaches crisis management by making every approaching finals week a crisis. It hones the ability to retain information needed only for the short term without cluttering up one's long term memory of important things. This is most valuable in our information overload era, in which a great deal of information is junk.²

Relevancy is a major goal of every reference librarian, and while cramming may not be the best training, it does offer numerous lessons applicable to librarians. The point is that so much that occurs in daily life has some reflection in reference service. That is part of what makes it exciting, and contributes to its constant state of change.

Cramming offers another important lesson: learning to evaluate what is and is not important. The problem has become not so much one of locating information as one of being able to sort out what information is relevant. As more than one wag has put it, Americans are lost in a sea of information. The problem is *not* in finding enough material to write a four-page paper on *Moby Dick*, or a dissertation on whales, or a government report on conserving sea life. The real difficulty is in finding a raft to ride out the mass of irrelevant data which turns up when one simply asks about the novel, the whale, or conservation.

More and more the public looks to the reference librarian to save them from the deluge. If anything, this is the primary role of the librarian in the 1990s—not just answering questions, but limiting the response to the individual's special needs. That is why it is important to understand the original question.

The fact is that information is rapidly becoming the nation's

²Gary M. Galles, "What Colleges Really Teach," *The New York Times*, June 8, 1989, p. A31. The article is a tongue-in-cheek criticism of cramming and of much of modern education. Along the way the author offers numerous truths.

most precious commodity. Thus the individual or company who can gather, evaluate, and synthesize information ahead of rivals will have a competitive advantage. Reference librarians are leading the way in managing the flow of information which, in the 1990s, will dominate national interests.

Information Science

Reference service is a springboard to information science³ wherein one is involved with all aspects of information, both theoretical and practical. On a given day a study may be launched to explore why a particular catalog entry baffles the average user. Another day it may be a carefully guarded examination of information-gathering skills of both friends and enemies. In between one may be exploring the methods of reference services, management of personnel, search processes, desktop publishing, and electronic archives—to mention only a few fields of interest in information science.

REFERENCE LIBRARIANS

Working at the reference desk is a marvelous intellectual game and can be great fun. Librarians prefer reference services to any position in the library: Year in and year out the graduating library school students rightfully conclude it is a highly desirable role to play in the library world.⁴

³Lawrence Auld, "Seven Imperatives for Library Education," *Library Journal*, May 1, 1990, p. 57. An educator makes the sensible distinction that information science "is the theoretical study of the life cycle of information," while library science "is the practical application . . . of the information cycle. . . . The problem for librarians is to determine the intersection of library science with information science." There is a massive amount of conjecture and unfortunate prose on what is or is not information science. A few sane voices such as Auld are about. For an objective evaluation of information, knowledge, and the role of the library see Pauline Wilson's excellent summary, "Mission and Information: What Business Are We In?" *The Journal of Academic Librarianship*, May 1988, pp. 82–86. A book-length discussion in clear, easy-to-understand prose is offered by John Olsgaard in his *Principles and Applications of Information Science for Library Professionals*. (Chicago: American Library Association, 1989). Michael Gorman, a frequent wise and witty critic of the passing library scene, takes a dim view of information science: "It's time for us, as librarians, to recognize and proclaim that there is a body of knowledge called librarianship." *American Libraries*, May 1990, pp. 461–462.

⁴William Moen and Kathleen Heim, "The Class of 1988 . . ." *American Libraries*, November 1988, p. 858. Beverly P. Lynch and Jo Ann Verdin, "Job Satisfaction in Libraries . . ." *Library Quarterly*, vol. 53, no. 4, 1983, p. 445.